



**Name: Sean Kelly**  
**Agency: Corrections**

I am a 36 year old Chemical Dependency Counselor at the Work Ethic Camp in McCook, Nebraska, and have always been overweight as long as I can remember. I am a large man at 6' 5" and remember the tuxedo I rented for prom; I wonder who the other person was that actually fit the tux before me! For me, when it came to food, I preferred quantity over quality. From high school age and up to my 30's I gradually gained weight steadily. I tried on and off to diet over the years, and was somewhat able to control the amount of gain through my activities; the doctors told me I was the healthiest unhealthy person they had met! However, when I acquired Type II diabetes, the weight really piled on.

After battling my weight for years, I was up to 495 pounds and was concerned that it was out of control, so I went to my doctor. The doctor calculated that a more ideal weight for my height would be 230 to 250 pounds. I knew that heart disease and diabetes run in my family and I wanted to nip the problem in the bud before I experienced some of the conditions my relatives have suffered. I was using massive amounts of insulin and was experiencing joint issues. I had tried other ways of controlling my weight, but because of insulin for my diabetes and lots of bad habits, I had poor results.

My doctor informed me of my options, and I chose to have the adjustable gastric band surgery. Having the surgery is not a "magic bullet" for patients – a lot of lifestyle changes must be made in order for it to impact the person's health and weight. I had the surgery about three years ago. A year prior to the surgery I had to lose 25 to 30 pounds of weight. I also had to have a mental-health evaluation. Once I had the surgery, I could only have liquids for the first month, then (gradually) pureed foods, soft foods, and then finally regular food. I only consumed ½ cup to a cup of food per meal. I still have to avoid foods that bind easily, such as rice or pasta, and I have to be careful to chew very thoroughly. I no longer get the mild hunger pains, such as an urge to snack; I only sense true hunger. "Now that I evaluate my past habits I realize I really didn't eat healthy! Since I am limited, I have to pay attention to nutrition and I eat a lot more carefully." I definitely eat healthy foods first.

Having the surgery has forced me to make some changes and knowing myself, despite the risks, this was the right choice for me. Once I started losing weight it got easier to lose more weight because I was encouraged to continue with better habits. Since the surgery, I have had to buy several sets of new clothes. I actually lost more weight during the second year than in the first.

I am down to 271 pounds and still losing – that's a loss of 224 pounds so far! My diabetes is not completely resolved, but I have significantly reduced the amount of insulin required. I was able to completely eliminate my blood pressure medication and cut the use of another medication in half. There are times I catch sight of my reflection and am startled because it looks like a different person. My new goal is to strengthen and tone. Having the surgery was worth it, but in the end it boils down to this: changing your behavior!

